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UNCLAS PRETORIA 000449

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA: NEW BANKNOTES ISSUED

1. (U) Summary. On February 1, the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) issued new banknotes with improved security features. The layout and "Big Five" animal theme of each banknote remains the same. Added are the South African Coat of Arms and use of all eleven official languages. The SARB began training financial sector employees last year to prepare for banknote introduction, and initiated a public education campaign in January. This banknote change follows the introduction of the new bi-metal R5 coin in August 2004, and is the first change in banknotes since 1992. End Summary.

2. (U) On February 1, the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) issued new banknotes with enhanced security features that make it easier to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit banknotes. Current banknotes in circulation will remain legal tender as they are phased out over time.

3. (U) The new features on the banknotes include:

- a gold band on the back of the note that reveals the denomination value and South African Coat of Arms when tilted;
- color-changing ink on the number value for denominations at and above R50 (approximately \$8);
- large geometric shapes that differentiate the banknotes for those that have impaired vision; and
- a hidden denomination value within the geometric shapes that can only be seen at a horizontal angle.

The SARB also improved several existing features, to include the following:

- a denomination value added to the watermark;
- raised printed diamond-shaped spots indicating the banknote denomination that enhances security and assists the blind;
- a see-through registration pattern that reveals the denomination value when held up to the light;
- unique serial numbers printed on the back of each banknote in differing colors and font size;
- micro-sized print of "South African Reserve Bank" invisible to the naked eye; and
- an upgraded silver security thread that becomes a solid dark line when held up to the light.

In addition, on banknote denominations of R50 and greater, the number value, "SARB," "RAND," and a South African Coat of Arms holograph all appear on the security thread. Smaller denominations only include the number value and "SARB" on the security thread.

4. (U) The "Big Five" animal theme (i.e., leopard, buffalo, lion, elephant, and rhino) will remain on the front of banknotes, and the back will continue to highlight the South African industries of mining, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, transportation, and communication. However, it will be the first time that the South African Coat of Arms and all eleven official languages will be displayed. The words "South African Reserve Bank" will be written in English on the front of each banknote. The back will include the same phrase written in two of the other 11 official languages, depending on the denomination. The two languages for each denomination are as follows: R10) Afrikaans and SiSwati; R20) Setswana and IsiNdebele; R50 - IsiXhosa and Tshivenda; R100 - Sesotho sa Leboa and Xitsonga; and R200 - IsiZulu and Sesotho.

5. (U) The SARB began training financial sector employees on the new banknotes in late 2004. Beginning in January, the SARB launched a campaign to educate the public. The campaign emphasizes that everyone make sure that they have "Makoya Moola," i.e., "real money." Television and radio commercials as well as educational radio programs are currently running in all eleven official languages. The campaign is also targeting the blind and deaf communities, who were consulted during banknote design process as well. The radio programs present a 15-minute skit about the new banknotes followed by a question and answer period with telephone callers. Mobile trailers are also moving around the country, setting up information booths at bus stops, train stations, taxi stands, and shopping centers. This banknote change follows the introduction of the new bi-metal R5 coin in August 2004 and

is the first change in banknotes since 1992.
FRAZER